

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PALERMO 0174

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH PALERMO DC OFFICIAL

1. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF CONVERSATION OF MARCH 2 AT CONGEN WITH NICOLA RAVIDA', VICE PRESIDENT OF "FEDERAZIONE NAZIONALE COOPERATIVE ORTOFRUTTICOLE ED AGRUMARIE", PALERMO DC OFFICIAL; DAVID C. LITT, AMERICAN VICE CONSUL; AND MICHELE CALDERONE, POLITICAL SPECIALIST, AMCONGEN, PALERMO.

2. BIO-NOTE: NICOLA RAVIDA', 38 YEARS OLD, IS AN EXAMPLE OF SICILY'S DECENT DC SOTTOGOVERNO. HE IS MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD BY INCLINATION. HE IS VERY ACTIVE IN FINDING NEW MARKETS FOR SICILIAN WINE AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS. NOT TOO LONG AGO, HE ACCOMPANIED AN OFFICIAL SICILIAN WINE MISSION TO THE U.S. AS AN AGRICULTURAL EXPERT. HE FAILED TO BE ELECTED TO THE NATIONAL CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES IN 1972 ON THE DC TICKET.

3. JUNE ELECTION PROSPECTS FOR THE DC: THE DC WILL INCREASE ITS 30 DEPUTIES REPRESENTATION IN SICILY'S 90-MEMBER REGIONAL ASSEMBLY IN THE UPCOMING JUNE REGIONAL ELECTION. THE DC SHOULD MAINTAIN THE LEVELS OF JUNE 15, 1975, WHEN IT RECOUPED CONSIDERABLY THE LOSSES OF THE 1971 REGIONAL ELECTION.

4. THREE CONDITIONS KEEP SICILY'S DC IN GOOD HEALTH (RELATIVE TO CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PARTY'S STATE IN NORTHERN ITALY): (1) CLIENTELISMO; (2)

CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE PCI AT THE REGION; (3) THE NATURE OF THE ISLAND'S ECONOMY WHICH, LACKING A PREVAILING PRODUCTIVE SECTOR, IS RESISTING THE PANGS OF THE RECESSION.

5. OF THE THREE CONDITIONS ABOVE, THE CONFRONTO WITH THE PCI IS THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL. DC REGIONAL SECRETARY ROSARIO NICOLETTI (FORZE NUOVE), WHO IS A STRONG ADVOCATE OF THE CONFRONTO, IS PLAYING THE GAME WITH INGENUITY, COURAGE AND INTELLIGENCE. HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO WIN THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNISTS TO THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM, BUT KEEPING THEM AT ARM'S LENGTH IN THE DIVISION OF THE SPOILS. AS A RESULT, THERE IS GROWING DISCORD WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE SICILIAN PCI TODAY: THOSE COMMUNISTS WHO EXPECT THE CONFRONTO TO PERMIT THEM TO SHARE IMMEDIATELY ON AN EQUAL BASIS THE BENEFITS OF POWER; AGAINST THOSE WHO FOSTER PCI-DC COLLABORATION, WHATEVER THE TERMS, FOR THE SAKE OF THE HISTORIC FUTURE COMPROMISE.

6. THE DC'S NATIONAL ROLE: ZACCAGNINI IS A VERY NICE MAN, BUT A LARGE NUMBER OF THE DC RANKS ARE AFRAID THAT HE IS A PUPPET OF PRIME MINISTER ALDO MORO. MANY SICILIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS BELIEVE THAT MORO'S ASPIRATION IS NOT TO PROVIDE THE DC WITH A CREDIBLE COUNTER-PROPOSAL TO THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE, BUT TO RENDER PAINLESS AND GRADUAL THE SURRENDER OF THE COUNTRY TO THE COMMUNISTS.

7. ON THE OTHER HAND, ARNALDO FORLANI'S HESITANT TACTICS IS NOT ENCOURAGING MORO'S CRITICS TO STAND UP. MEANWHILE, THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND THE ITALIAN PRESS ARE OILING THE PCI'S WHEELS. RUSCONI'S "IL SETTIMANALE" AND MONTANELLI'S "IL GIORNALE NUOVO" ARE THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT VOICES WHO STAND UP AGAINST THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE.

8. THE UNITED STATES AND ITALY: THE IMAGE OF THE U.S. HAS NEVER BEEN SO LOW IN THE HEARTS OF THE ITALIANS. IT IS FOOLISH FOR THE U.S. TO SPEND MONEY TO HELP ITALIAN POLITICIANS OR PARTIES. THE U.S. SHOULD SPEND MONEY TO RESTORE ITS IMAGE IN ITALY, MAINLY BY CULTURAL MEANS.

9. COMMENT: BECAUSE OF HIS JOB NICOLA RAVIDA' FEELS THE PULSE OF AN IMPORTANT SECTOR OF SICILIAN DC VOTERS: THE FARMERS, IN CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTICULAR WINE PRODUCERS AND CITRUS GROWERS. HIS IDEAS REFLECT TO A LARGER EXTENT THE MOOD OF PART OF THE SICILIAN DC CONSTITUENCY THAN DO THE POLITICIANS WHO FORMALLY REPRESENT THEM IN PARLIAMENT.

10. MOST REVEALING WAS RAVIDA'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CHURCH AND NORTHERN INDUSTRIALISTS, AN ATTITUDE RATHER COMMON WITHIN LOCAL DC RANKS. HE FELT THAT THE CHURCH HAS BEEN TOO SOFT WITH THE

COMMUNISTS AND LAX WITH PUBLIC MORALITY. THE DC MILITANT--HE SAID--IS PUZZLED BETWEEN THE OLD CORRUPT CLERGY THAT BRINGS VOTES TO THE DC BUT TARNISHES THE PARTY'S IMAGE AND THE YOUNGER HONEST CLERGY ALLERGIC TO THE DC AND MODERATE POLITICS.

11. RAVIDA' MENTIONED TWO CAPITALIST "SINNERS" AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE WIDESPREAD INSANITY PREVAILING IN NORTHERN CIRCLES: GIOVANNI AGNELLI AND ARNOLDO MONDADORI, WHO HAVE DRAWN HUGE BENEFITS FROM THE DC REGIME, ARE FINANCING A PRESS (LA REPUBBLICA, LA STAMPA, L'ESPRESSO, PANORMA) UNABASHEDLY MERCILESS WITH THE DC.  
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